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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002027

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PHUM PTER PGOV I2 IR

SUBJECT: MEK IN CAMP ASHRAF: INTRANSIGENCE LEADS TO VIOLENT CONFRONTATION

REF: BAGHDAD 2009 AND PREVIOUS.

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Robert Ford for reasons 1.4(b)&(d).

¶11. (C) Summary. Following a stalemate between the GOI and the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MEK) (reftel), Iraqi police and army forces entered Camp Ashraf July 28 to establish an Iraqi police presence, encountering violent resistance from camp residents. According to GOI Ashraf Committee Chairman Ali Abdul Amir al-Yassery, Camp Ashraf residents engaged Iraqi forces outside the confines of the camp, setting vehicles on fire, throwing Molotov cocktails, and setting off concussion grenades. (Note. TF-134 was unable to confirm the use of fire or Molotov cocktails against GOI forces, only rocks. End note.) Al-Yassery also claims GOI forces were ordered by the PM to take casualties at the expense of injuring the residents of the camp. The GOI reports that 25 GOI forces and between 18-20 camp residents have suffered injuries, claiming at least one Iraqi Army officer has been seriously wounded. Al-Yassery claims the residents suffered only minor injuries and were being treated by the GOI. TF-134, however, is reporting that at least 100 residents have been injured. GOI forces have established a presence inside the camp, but claim they are no longer physically confronting camp residents. We have been urging restraint on both sides. End summary.

¶12. (C) On July 28, at approximately 0900, GOI forces began gathering at the perimeters of Camp Ashraf, Diyala Province. Among them were members of the riot police in full gear and SWAT team members. Per the GOI's earlier assertions to camp residents (see reftel), COL Sa'di Habib Hussein al-Dulaymi, the new site commander for Camp Ashraf, arrived at the camp at 1100. During a meeting with MEK leadership, COL Sa'di reiterated the intention of the GOI to enter the camp and establish an Iraqi police (IP) station, according to U.S. soldiers on the scene under TF-134. The MEK leadership refused the Iraqi police entry, claiming that residents would forcefully resist any entrance by Iraqi forces. With no concessions by the MEK, COL Sa'di left the meeting and ordered GOI forces to prepare to breach the camp fence using trucks, humvees, water cannons, water tanks, ambulances and bulldozers. EmbOffs spoke with GOI officials three times over the course of the day to urge restraint and compliance with human rights assurances. Al-Yassery informed EmbOffs that Iraqi forces entered Camp Ashraf without ammunition, citing direct orders from the PM that Iraqi troops "should take the injuries and casualties, not the residents of Ashraf." Each time, EmbOffs urged the GOI to show continued restraint in dealing with camp residents.

¶13. (C) GOI forces entered the camp at approximately 1600 using four simultaneous points of entry. According to al-Yassery, residents resisted this incursion using Molotov cocktails and concussion grenades, setting vehicles on fire, and at times, engaging the Iraqi forces outside the camp. He claimed a few residents attacked the Iraqi base located

outside the camp, but were detained by GOI forces. TF-134 confirmed residents assaulted GOI forces with rocks; however, they could not confirm al-Yassery's claims. As a result of the violent clashes between the camp residents and the GOI forces, al-Yassery asserted, approximately 25 IP and 18-20 camp residents were injured, with one Iraqi military officer suffering serious injuries. Al-Yassery claimed the residents' injuries were minor. TF-134, by contrast, has advised that approximately 100 residents were injured, mainly from being hit with batons or being injured by bulldozers breaching the camp walls. Al-Yassery claimed the injured are being treated by the GOI forces, but we are unable to confirm this.

¶4. (C) Al-Yassery asserted on July 28 evening that GOI forces had established an IP station within the camp and that the situation was calm. "The residents continue to protest at the gate, but we are not bothering them," said al-Yassery.

TF-134 subsequently reported that camp residents attempted to take control of gate 12F using a frontloader. Iraqi forces fired warning shots and targeted the frontloader to disable it and regain control of the gate.

¶5. (C) Comment. The GOI had made it very clear to the residents of Camp Ashraf that it would establish a police presence at the camp. The GOI insists on its sovereign right to do so. Embassy has urged both sides to show restraint and to negotiate a peaceful solution to this problem. The MEK have been unwilling to compromise and the GOI has run out of patience. The MEK is trying to publicize today's action with graphic footage on the internet and press statements denouncing the GOI's actions and calling for U.S. and UN

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intervention. These events are likely a prelude of events to come: the GOI will eventually seek to relocate the residents of Camp Ashraf to a location farther from the border with Iran. We doubt Iranian pressure on Baghdad about the MEK will stop and therefore the GOI likely will keep up its pressure to move the MEK. End Comment.

FORD